ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A vending machine includes a plurality of column walls that collectively define an associated plurality of stack areas for storing product containers. The column wall includes various, vertically spaced and fore-to-aft extending stiffeners embossed into the column wall. The integral stiffeners eliminate the need for any additional discrete stiffener parts and fasteners. In addition, the integral stiffeners advantageously permit thinner material to be employed in forming the column walls, thereby improving the entire manufacturing process. Preferably, one of the stiffeners constitutes a decoupling member which isolates a bottom portion of the column wall from a top portion and substantially prevents bow forces from transferring into a dispensing region of the column wall. Furthermore, each of the column walls is integrally formed with an alignment member or louver structure in the form of a guide element or flange which provides for proper product positioning through a vending area.